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Chief Medical Officer/Medical Director NHS Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Dr Tracey Cooper  
Chief Executive  
Public Health Wales

7 February 2020

Dear Tracey,

I write to confirm my support to the testing process introduced by the Specialist Virology Centre in Public Health Wales (PHW). This includes:

1. Use of an E-gene test for 2019-nCoV developed by the PHW laboratory at the University Hospital of Wales, as a *screening* test, following assessment of a 'possible' case of 2019-nCoV in Wales.
2. Use of a second-line test targeting a different gene (RdRp) of the 2019-nCoV as recommended by WHO and the PHE Colindale laboratory, used under the conditions specific to the Cardiff laboratory, as a *confirmatory* test.

After a screening positive and confirmatory positive result a second sample will be sent to PHE Colindale for gene sequencing.

A positive test result from the Specialist Virology Centre in Public Health Wales will inform clinical decision-making including patient referral to one of the designated HCID units in England as well as trigger the communication protocol for a confirmed case agreed between the four UK CMOs.

This decision is informed by several assurances I have sought. Firstly, assurance on the scientific considerations that informed the development of the Cardiff 2019-nCoV test and its method of application in the Cardiff laboratory. Specifically the assurances that the test sensitivity and specificity meet WHO specification and match Eurosurveillance data. I am satisfied that this has been described in the report prepared for NERVTAG but discussed with PHE Colleagues earlier this week (attached). Secondly, assurance on the process for the adoption of the Cardiff 2019-nCoV test in Wales. I am satisfied that this has been addressed in the discussion between myself and Dr Marion Lyons, Senior Medical Officer in Welsh Government, and the Director of the National Infection Service in PHE. Thirdly, assurance from Public Health Wales that they have developed a Standard Operating Procedure for the Detection of 2019-nCoV using the ABI 7500 Fast. I note that an SOP has been shared with Dr Lyons.

Finally, I would like to place on record my appreciation of the actions taken by Public Health Wales in response to the threat from 2019-nCoV including the support provided to my team.

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

DR FRANK ATHERTON



Irrelevant & Sensitive

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